

FRED MARCHANT

A Day Later

Thus lines of force that pass through us
leading to fields and cities: muddy fingers,
a tailor's needle and thread, an invisible line
that slips through my fingers like water, leads
me down to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre,
the city of narrow, well-worn paths, dark stairs
and rotundas loud with pilgrims and prayer,
the beadle's stick leading his own to this altar,
to gold icons, their sad faces. Priests in black,
Ethiopian Copts, squat outside in a corner by
a charcoal fire, a heat-treasure, as it is winter,
the day short, and a wind has come up from
the desert. There is a wood-smell from fibers
of the planet, a fire with little light but reason
for a prayer, and smoke that rises like incense.